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11 March 1958

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CURRENT SUPPORT MEMORANDUM

MILITARY TRAINING OF MIDDLE EAST NATIONALS IN THE BLOC

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

This report represents the immediate views of the
originating intelligence components of the Office
of Research and Reports. Comments are solicited.

W - A - R - N - I - N - G

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MILITARY TRAINING OF MIDDLE EAST NATIONALS IN THE BLOC

Since 1955, approximately 1,300 Middle East nationals have undergone military training in the bloc. Courses of instruction have included many phases of ground, air and naval training and were undertaken primarily in Poland, the USSR and Czechoslovakia.

Poland has provided training facilities for more than 41 percent of the Middle East nationals trained and has been the site for all naval training undertaken. Courses have been provided in the operation and maintenance of destroyers, submarines, motor torpedo boats, mine-sweepers and coastal artillery. 1/ In addition, some pilot training has been provided and, perhaps, some training in armor and artillery. 2/

Czechoslovakia has been a major site for flight training and has provided courses in flight instruction and operational tactics for fighter and bomber pilots. 3/

The USSR is providing a considerable amount of training in land armaments and aircraft but did not become a major location for military training until 1957. This factor is probably a result of the early reluctance of the USSR to be directly associated with arms agreements. The Egyptian and Syrian arms agreements in 1955 and 1956 were negotiated through Czechoslovakia. Since late 1956, however, the USSR has undertaken direct negotiations in arranging for arms deliveries.

Egypt and Syria have provided almost all the military trainees sent to the bloc. It was not until December 1957 that Afghanistan sent 50 students for training in the USSR. 4/ Yemen, the only other country which has contracted for bloc arms, has not sent trainees to the bloc. There are, however, a number of Yemeni students attending Egyptian military schools. 5/

Most of the training has been for short periods, usually less than six months. During 1957 the USSR began to emphasize training involving periods of a year or more. Staff and line officers through the rank of general are being trained for command assignments. Large numbers of Egyptian officers are being trained to reorganize the Egyptian army along the lines of the bloc military structure. 6/ High-ranking Syrian officers are being selected to undertake four-year training programs at the Staff College at Frunze--the senior Soviet military college. 7/

Historically, the military groups in the Middle East have been the major source of strength for any authority. A major impact of Western influence was evident in the organization of the military. Training of indigenous military leaders and contact with Western technical superiority strongly affected the course of nationalist development in these areas. The effect of present Soviet bloc training upon future military leaders may profoundly affect political orientation of these countries, particularly when the military is the dominant group in Egypt and Syria.

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MILITARY TRAINING IN THE BLOC

		USSR				Czechoslovakia				Poland				East Germany	Grand Total
		Land Armament	Navy	Air	Total	Land Armament	Navy	Air	Total	Land Armament	Navy	Air	Total		
Egypt	1955										300		300		300
	1956							100	100		50	80	130		230
	1957	85		60	145	60		150	210		30		30		385
	Total	85		60	145	60		250	310		380	80	460		915
Syria	1955														
	1956											25	25		25
	1957	80		130	210	10		15	25		40		40	3*	278
	Total	80		130	210	10		15	25		40	25	65	3	303
Afghani- stan	1955														
	1956														
	1957	50			50										50
	Total	50			50										50
Grand Total		215		190	405	70		265	335		420	105	525	3	1,268
Percent of Total					31.9				26.4				41.4	.3	

*Communications

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Sources:

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